

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims would replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A community based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network[[,]] and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate[[,]] and for categorizing and accumulating messages posted to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means for respective topics, said community processing means including:

summary message managing means for managing summary messages which summarize messages accumulated in the virtual community for respective topics; and

user access limiting means for:

managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community[[,]] and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community, [[and]]

determining accessible virtual community for each of the client terminals using a combination

of the community type and member type
for each virtual community as an access
destination, and

providing a window which allows each of the
client terminals to access the accessible
virtual community.

2. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 1, wherein said user access limiting means determines an access that a client terminal, as an access request source, can make on the basis of the combination of the community type and member type, and provides a window which allows only the determined access to the client terminal as the access request source.
3. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 1, wherein when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members, said user access limiting means permits a user, whose member type for the virtual community is "member," to post and browse messages, and inhibits a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member," from posting and browsing messages.
4. (Currently Amended) A system according to claim 1, wherein ~~said community processing means further comprises:~~
~~means for managing summary messages which summarize messages~~
~~accumulated in the virtual community for respective topics, and~~
when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members, said user access limiting means permits a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member[[],]" to post and browse all messages including the summary messages[[],] and permits a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous

member[[],]]” to browse only summary messages having an open attribute of the summary messages in the virtual community.

5. (Previously Presented) A system according to claim 1, wherein
the community type of each virtual community includes “open” that allows everyone to participate, “membership” for only a group of authorized members, and “closed” that is not open to the public other than authorized members,
the member type indicating the participation attribute of the user includes “member” who has been authorized to participate, “temporary registered member” who is temporarily registered as a member, “intending member” who has applied to participate but has not been authorized to participate yet, and “other,” and
said user access limiting means determines accesses that the client terminal as the access request source can make on the basis of combinations between the “open”, “membership,” and “closed” community types, and the “member,” “temporary registered member,” “intending member,” and “other” member types.
6. (Original) A system according to claim 1, further comprising
search means for searching messages accumulated in virtual communities in response to a search request from the client terminal, and
wherein said user access limiting means provides a search result list consisting of message search results that browse authority of the client terminal as the search request source can cover of messages which match the search result on the basis of a combination of the community type of the virtual community which is to undergo search, and the member type of the client

terminal as the search request source for the virtual community.

7. (Currently Amended) A user access limiting method in a community based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network[[,]] and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] an community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate[[,]] and of categorizing and accumulating messages posted[[,]] to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step for respective topics, the community processing step including:

a summary message managing step of managing summary messages which summarize the messages for respective topics; and

[[the]] a user access limiting step of:

managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community[[,]] and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community, [[and]]

determining accessible virtual community for each of the client terminals using a combination of the community type and member type for each virtual community as an access destination, and

providing a window which allows each of the
client terminals to access the accessible
virtual community.

8. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein the user access limiting step includes the step of determining an access that a client terminal, as an access request source, can make on the basis of the combination of the community type and member type, and providing a window which allows only the determined access to the client terminal as the access request source.
9. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein the user access limiting step includes the step of permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member," to post and browse messages, and inhibiting a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member," from posting and browsing messages, when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members.
10. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 7, wherein
~~messages accumulated in the virtual community include summary messages~~
~~which summarize the messages for respective topics, and~~
the user access limiting step includes [[the]] a step of permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member[[,]]" to post and browse all messages including the summary messages[[,]] and a step of permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member[[,]]" to browse only summary messages having an open attribute of the summary messages in the virtual community, when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members.

11. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein
the community type of each virtual community includes "open" that allows everyone to participate, "membership" for only a group of authorized members, and "closed" that is not open to the public other than authorized members,
the member type indicating the participation attribute of the user includes "member" who has been authorized to participate, "temporary registered member" who is temporarily registered as a member, "intending member" who has applied to participate but has not been authorized to participate yet, and "other," and
the user access limiting step includes the step of determining accesses that the client terminal as the access request source can make on the basis of combinations between the "open," "membership," and "closed" community types, and the "member," "temporary registered member," "intending member," and "other" member types.
12. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 7, further comprising
[[the]] a search step of searching messages accumulated in virtual communities in response to a search request from the client terminal,
[[and]]
wherein the user access limiting step includes [[the]] a step of providing a search result list[[,]] consisting of message search results ~~that browse authority of the client terminal as the search request source can cover of messages which match the search result,~~ limited on the basis of a combination of the community type of the virtual community which is to undergo search[[,]] and the member type of the client terminal as the search request source for the virtual community.

13. (Currently Amended) A program used in a community based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network[[,]] and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate[[,]] and of categorizing and accumulating messages posted[[,]] to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step for respective topics, the community processing step including:

a summary message managing step of managing summary messages which summarize the messages for respective topics, and

[[the]] a user access limiting step of:

managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community[[,]] and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community, [[and]]

determining accessible virtual community for each of the client terminals using a combination of the community type and member type for each virtual community as an access destination, and

providing a window which allows each of the
client terminals to access the accessible
virtual community.

14. (Previously Presented) A program according to claim 13, wherein the user access limiting step includes the step of determining an access that a client terminal, as an access request source, can make on the basis of the combination of the community type and member type, and providing a window which allows only the determined access to the client terminal as the access request source.
15. (Previously Presented) A program according to claim 13, wherein the user access limiting step includes the step of permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member," to post and browse messages, and inhibiting a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member," from posting and browsing messages, when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members.
16. (Currently Amended) A program according to claim 13, wherein
~~messages accumulated in the virtual community include summary messages~~
~~which summarize the messages for respective topics, and~~
the user access limiting step includes [[the]] a step of permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member[[,]]" to post and browse all messages including the summary messages[[,]] and a step of permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member[[,]]" to browse only summary messages having an open attribute of the summary messages in the virtual community, when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members.

17. (Previously Presented) A program according to claim 13, wherein
- the community type of each virtual community includes "open" that allows everyone to participate, "membership" for only a group of authorized members, and "closed" that is not open to the public other than authorized members,
 - the member type indicating the participation attribute of the user includes "member" who has been authorized to participate, "temporary registered member" who is temporarily registered as a member, "intending member" who has applied to participate but has not been authorized to participate yet, and "other," and
 - the user access limiting step includes the step of determining accesses that the client terminal as the access request source can make on the basis of combinations between the "open", "membership", and "closed" community types, and the "member," "temporary registered member," "intending member," and "other" member types.

18. (Currently Amended) A program according to claim 13, further comprising
- [[the]] a search step of searching messages accumulated in virtual communities in response to a search request from the client terminal, [[and]]
 - wherein the user access limiting step includes [[the]] a step of providing a search result list[[,.]] consisting of message search results ~~that browse authority of the client terminal as the search request source can cover of messages which match the search result,~~ limited on the basis of a combination of the community type of the virtual community which is-to undergo search[[,.]] and the member type of the client terminal as the search request source for the virtual community.

19. (Previously Presented) A community based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each of the client terminals to a virtual community, comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a given client terminal, included among the client terminals, as an access request source so as to permit the given client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which the client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means, for respective topics;

said community processing means including:

summary message managing means for managing summary messages which summarize messages accumulated in the virtual community for respective topics; and

user access limiting means for managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community, and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community, and, when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members, permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member" to post and browse all messages including the summary messages, and permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member" to browse only summary messages having an open attribute of the summary messages in the virtual-community.

20. (Currently Amended) A community based collaborative knowledge system which can be-connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network[[,]] and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each of the client terminals to-a virtual community, comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a given client terminal, included among the client terminals, as an access request source so as to permit the given client terminal to post a message;
community processing means for managing a virtual community in which the client terminals can participate[[,]] and for categorizing and accumulating messages posted[[,]] to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means[[,]] for respective topics; and
search means for searching messages accumulated in virtual communities in response to a full-text search request from the client terminal; said community processing means including:

user access limiting means for:

managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community[[,]] and

providing a search result list consisting of message search results ~~that browse authority of the given client terminal as the search request source can cover~~ messages which match the search result limited on the basis of a combination of the community type of the virtual community which is to undergo search[[,]] and the member type of the client terminal as the

search request source for the virtual
community.

21. (Previously Presented) A user access limiting method in a community based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each of the client terminals to a virtual community, comprising:

the access control step of making user authentication of a given client terminal, included among the client terminals, as an access request source so as to permit the given client terminal to post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which the client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics;

the community processing step including:

the summary message managing step of managing summary messages which summarize messages accumulated in the virtual community for respective topics; and

the user access limiting step of managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community, and, when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members, permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member" to post and browse all messages including the summary messages, and permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member" to browse only summary

messages having an open attribute of the summary messages in the virtual-community.

22. (Currently Amended): A user access limiting method in a community based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a-network[[,]] and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each of the client terminals to a virtual community, comprising:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a given client terminal, included among the client terminals, as an access request source so as to permit the given client terminal to post a message;

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which the client terminals can participate[[,]] and of categorizing and accumulating messages posted[[,]] to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step[[,]] for respective topics; and

[[the]] a search step of searching messages accumulated in virtual communities in response to a full-text search request from the client terminal, the community processing step including:

[[the]] a user access limiting step of:

managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community[[,]] and

providing a search result list consisting of message search results ~~that browse authority of the client terminal as the search request source can cover~~ messages which match the search result limited on the basis of a combination of the

community type of the virtual community which is to undergo search[[,]] and the member type of the given client terminal as the search request source for the virtual community.

23. (Previously Presented) A program used in a community based collaborative

knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each of the client terminals to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

the access control step of making user authentication of a given client terminal, included among the client terminals, as an access request source so as to permit the given client terminal to post a message; and

the community processing step of managing a virtual community in which the client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics;

the community processing step including:

the summary message managing step of managing summary messages which summarize messages accumulated in the virtual community for respective topics; and

the user access limiting step of managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community, and , when the virtual community has a community type "membership" for only a group of authorized members, permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is "member" to post and browse all messages including the

summary messages, and permitting a user whose member type for the virtual community is unauthorized "intending member" or "anonymous member" to browse only summary messages having an open attribute of the summary messages in the virtual community.

24. (Currently Amended) A program used in a community based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network[[,]] and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each of the client terminals to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a given client terminal, included among the-client terminals, as an access request source so as to permit the given client terminal to post a message;

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which the client terminals can participate[[,]] and of categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics; and

[[the]] a search step of searching messages accumulated in virtual communities in response to a full-text search request from the client terminal; the community processing step including:

[[the]] a user access limiting step of:

managing a community type indicating an open level of each virtual community and a member type indicating a participation attribute of a user to the virtual community[[,]] and

providing a search result list[[,]] consisting of message search results that ~~browse authority of the given client terminal as the search request source can cover~~

~~messages which match the search result,~~
limited on the basis of a combination of the
community type of the virtual community
which is to undergo search[[,]] and the
member type of the given client terminal as
the search request source for the virtual
community.